

Many Mistakes in Printing
AN

ADDRESS

TO THE 178

PARISHIONERS OF MUXON,

IN THE

COUNTY OF STAFFORD,

UPON THE

AWFUL AND ALARMING

QUANTITIES OF RAIN

WHICH HAVE FALLEN AT THIS TIME.

Vet. As — f. 2091





MY GOOD FRIENDS,

AT a melancholy period like the present, when the Heavens seem to portend no good season to the husbandman, and all nature is apparently out of order, it is the duty of every individual to reflect upon his weakness and inability to help himself.

Those who have an idea of a God, who made and governs the world, will naturally look up to him for protection, acknowledging his goodness and power. He will reflect upon his own ways, and consider how it happens, that the goodness of God is so little discerned at this moment. This will bid him to inquire, whether it is for any sin which he has committed, that the beneficence of the Almighty ceases to flow; and, reflecting in this manner, the true believer will endeavour to amend his ways. We are, all of us, sure enough, greatly short of that righteousness which God expects from us—we are all gone out of the way—there is none that doeth good; and though there are some of purer lives and conversation than others, yet we must all confess that we are unprofitable servants.

The power of God is infinite; and if we still go on in our wickedness, we must expect that he will exert that power in a wonderful manner. And though he is not willing that any should perish; yet, if we still persist in our unlawful doings—if we still persevere in our sins, and bid defiance to that mercy which is able and willing to save us, what can we look for, but that fearful and tremendous judgment which he has threatened, and will execute on the wicked. “When the judgments of God are in the earth, should not the inhabitants of

the world learn righteousness?" Let me persuade you, then, my good friends, to begin this great work: I can have no interest in recommending ~~it~~ to your notice ~~this~~, but your present and eternal welfare; and it gives me daily concern to think, that there are so many amongst us who seem to be totally lost to every religious sentiment.—Let me beg of you to think seriously and solemnly what you are doing, and for what purpose you were sent into life. At this important crisis, when all our labors for the sustenance of ourselves and our fellow-creatures, seem to be nothing but vanity; when all the produce of the earth seems to be in danger of being destroyed; whither can we flee for support? Whither, but to him who first stretched out, and can alone sustain, the earth above the waters; adoring his goodness for having spared us until this time; imploring the continuance of his gracious protection; endeavouring to avert his judgments from our country, by contributing all in our power to its reformation. Seeing things in this view, let each of us ask ourselves in the words of the keeper of the prison, who was awakened by a like event, "What must I do to be saved?"—And let us do this not only at the present instant when we feel and experience the threatened calamity, but let us be in earnest in this business, persevere unto the end, knowing that by this conduct we shall obtain a crown of life.—It is a melancholy duty for me to perform, but still it is my duty, to prophesy evil things concerning all those who are wilfully wicked; and such may undoubtedly conclude, that unless they repent, there can be no salvation for them. There is scarcely a page in the gospels which does not inculcate this doctrine, and declare, that without amendment of life, ~~without~~ ~~holiness~~, none can enter into the kingdom of righteousness. "No one can see the Lord," is an express de-

claration of scripture, and as true as it is awful.—Let it sink deep into your minds, and let it not be the consideration of the moment only, but let it be so fixed in your hearts, that it may bring forth the fruits of good living. Were afflictions to be considered as merely coming forth of the dust, and trouble as springing out of the ground, without any higher origin, or any wiser design, they would leave our condition still more uncomfortable than it is, because we should lose much of that assistance which they now give us to improve our dispositions. And, in fact, who is it that is the most impatient under his own sufferings, and unimproved by those of other men, but him who has not God in all his thoughts? Affliction is then only fitted to have its proper effect upon men—“ When all that see it shall say, this hath God done,” and when they who feel the smart shall perceive that it is his work.

And thus it is, that both reason and revelation teach us to consider every occurrence as appointed by God, and subject to his direction—“ It was he, who first measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out Heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance.” And if at any time this stupendous arrangement of things is to the destruction of some, and the astonishment of all, disturbed, we may be sure that nothing of this kind can happen without his concurrence, or permission, who first formed the world. Fire and vapor, and stormy wind, whether within the cavities of the earth, or upon the surface of it; whether producing effects common and unheeded, or unusual and surprising, are all the while executing the orders of their Maker, and fulfilling his word.

And the Almighty intends and expects, when

his hand is lifted up, that his rational creatures should see, and stand in awe of it ; but “ an unwise man doth not consider this, and a fool, or an irreligious person, doth not understand it.”

But we ought to reflect, that when the God of Nature appears to depart from his usual methods of conducting his works, every individual should inquire into the reasons of such deviations.

God is, no doubt, the absolute Lord and Proprietor of the whole earth : He is also the wise and good Governor of it ; when, therefore, besides those distresses and diseases, which are commonly attendant upon folly and vice, as the natural consequences of them, he makes bare his arm in some unusual infliction, when the inhabitants of the earth find themselves aggrieved as at this time, not only with wars, but threatened likewise with famine in their land — when he sends, as the scripture says, his great army, the locust and the caterpillar, or a deluge of waters, causing some of his judgments to pass through it, surely, those who are wise, will ponder such things ; and, with all humility, reflect on what errand such afflictive dispensations may be supposed to be sent ; and what instructions the God of Mercy may be presumed to offer, by sending this, his strange and awful work.

Should we not then search and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord, in order to avert the evils with which we are threatened ?

This will be, in the most proper sense, to learn righteousness ; and would to God that we, of this kingdom, had less reason to apply these judgments to ourselves. If, indeed, upon an impartial scrutiny, we should find ourselves (even comparatively with other nations) without sin, yet let us not flatter ourselves that we are righteous enough. In such an imagination, believe me, we should greatly deceive ourselves : nor will the destruction be less

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fatal, should we grow secure upon finding ourselves without guilt, in some instances, where others are most guilty.—We should stand clear of every sin. We should examine ourselves whether, though we do not commit murder, we are free from every malevolent wish? Whether, though we do not deny the God of Heaven, we do not blaspheme his holy name, and live in constant defiance of his laws? Whether, though we do not persecute the faithful servants of Christ, and torture many sincere professors of his religion, we do not fall into the opposite extreme of caring for none of these things?

How long the great Governor of the Universe may think fit to suspend the execution of his dreadful sentence against a guilty land, it is not possible for us to say; but we may rest assured, that the Judge of all the earth will certainly do right: he will never let his corrections return to him in vain or ineffectual: he will never let either personal or national impenitence finally prevail against his righteous government. We may be assured, that as he has said, so will he do—he will reward the virtuous with Heaven, and eternal happiness, and the wicked will have their deserts.

Let us consider then in what manner we may receive instruction, so as to correct us in our wickedness. Let us consider whether afflictions are not calculated to produce in the true Christian a lively sentiment of the emptiness and frailty of all the advantages and goods of this earth. Whether they are not calculated to make us more attentive to our ways, and inspire us with a zeal to work our own salvation with fear and trembling. How often does it happen to the darling of fortune, that the deceitful splendour with which he is surrounded, dazzles his mind, and he is led astray from God and religion. The riches and the honours of life attract all his attention: they occupy his mind so

much, that the thoughts of ~~it~~ and his laws are banished from his soul, and the most exalted and most important truths make little or no impression on his heart ; he forgets his Creator and Benefactor, and grounds his comfort, his hope, and his confidence, in things which are merely dependent upon events, that are totally unable to make their possessor happy ; seldom or never does he think upon eternity, and his spirit, which is immortal, and endowed with such amazing capacities, remains ignorant and vicious, death at length arrives, and all his imaginary happiness departs for ever. But the pious man has many comforts, amidst all the vanity and folly of life : he thinks upon God ; the consideration of futurity is a consolation amidst every evil ; it produces in him the beautiful fruits of righteousness, regarding himself as a guest and a stranger upon earth ; he looks up to Heaven as his country ; the improvement of his heart, and the increase of his good dispositions, is his principal and dearest concern ; his whole life is a serious preparation for that perfection and happiness that awaits him beyond the grave ; he thinks without fear of his end, and even wishes for the moment of his dissolution, sensible of his entire dependence upon God. He adores his will. He gives the Lord the honour due unto his name, and cries out in humble submission, " Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but ~~with~~ ^{unto} thy name be the praise," for he knows that it is the Lord who maketh poor and maketh rich, who bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to make him inherit the throne of glory. He doth whatever he pleases in heaven and on earth, and none can stay his hand and say, What doest thou ? If God, then, thus powerful, wishes to fetch us home by correction, our fancied goodness and deserts vanish ; then are we ashamed of that artifice

by which we endeavoured to impose upon ourselves ; we then in earnest begin to prove and examine our hearts and our actions ; we see ourselves then as we really are ; we feel our weakness, and perceive the multitude of failings and of crimes, that render us odious in the sight of God ; we lament the wretchedness of our condition, we deplore our transgressions, we form a fixt purpose to amend, we vow to the Most High a voluntary and constant obedience. In this case, Who is there that does not confess, that it is good for him to have been afflicted ? The adversities that befall us are often the richest sources of patience, of contentment, of confidence and hope ; they teach us to wean our hearts from earth, and call upon us to place all our trust on the grace and support of the Almighty. They incite us to prayer, and cause us to feel the high worth of religion, and all its heavenly comforts. They inspire us with gentle dispositions towards our neighbour, and make us sensible of the distresses of others. Shall we then complain if the Father of Mercies should visit his children with various sorrows, since they tend to make us virtuous, and promote the spirit of religion in our hearts ? Or shall we venture to charge the Ruler of the World with injustice, if in the distribution of the goods and advantages of the earth he does not regard the persons of men, but proceeds upon general laws, since we know that our present state is not a state of retribution, ^{but} of discipline and trial ? No ; let us, my friends, confess, that the Lord even then acts with wisdom and kindness, when he allows the pious to contend with misfortunes, and to experience the most severe disappointments. Let us confess, that all his ways are holy, just and good, and that they have nothing in view but our true felicity. Let us humbly adore his will, and never impatiently revine at the

dispensations of his Providence. Let us endeavour to make ourselves well pleasing to him by holiness and virtue, and turn both prosperity and adversity, both agreeable and disagreeable events, to the furtherance of his grand design. This is our appointment upon earth, and if we fulfill it, we cannot fail to be happy, let every thing else go with us as it will. Strive after a real and constant happiness, and seek it where it is actually to be found. Apply yourselves, above all things, to the cultivation, the improvement, and the ~~satisfaction~~^{Sanctification} of your spirit, which is framed for eternity. Endeavour at the essential and permanent advantage which piety and virtue will procure for you.— Make it your satisfaction and your glory to secure the favour and the grace of God, to have the testimony of a good conscience, and to cherish the hopes of everlasting bliss; so will your honour and pleasure depend upon events superior to time and opinion; you will pity the slave of vice, instead of being envious of his seeming successes; and you will be undisturbed, serene and satisfied, amidst the greatest revolutions of your outward affairs.

This is the advice of one, who, though he can not boast of any superior merit of his own, yet an admirer of holiness and virtue in others, and anxious that all mankind, as well as those who are committed to his immediate care, should attain not only temporal felicity here, but that greater and more important happiness, which is reserved for all hereafter.

I remain your affectionate and real friend,

O. CREW

MUXON, Oct. 12, 1799.

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